

From: Joseph Shields
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/7/02 6:09pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

A few ywars ago now, i remember getting a CD free with an issue of PC Plus with a bootable demo of BeOS 4.5 on it. I instantly fell in love with the system, getting used to all the advantages it held over Windows, bemoaning only the lack of support for my (considerable) collection of Windows-only software and hardware.

I proceeded to buy BeOS 5 Professional about a year later, to help do my bit to support a fantastic piece of software.

However, I was most distressed to read online that the BeOS was officially dead. This is an extremely unfortunate state of affairs, and is solely down to strong-arm tactics carried out by the Microsoft Operating System monopoly.

There is a large community at work, all of whom would like to see a viable update or evolution of the BeOS back in the marketplace. However, there are a number of factors which place Microsoft in a position which simply cannot be challenged now that their monopoly is in place.

The Windows system itself is a closely guarded secret, and as it is unfair to expect software manufacturers to re-write a version of their software for every Operating System under the sun, the only alternative is for an Operating System to have built-in support for another. In this case, BeOS (or any one of a hundred other systems) could sensibly compete with the Windows monopoly if the core components of the source of Windows, the API-related functions (especially the DirectX API, the workhorse of Windows as a platform for playing videogames), were made available. Lack of competition is bad for the consumer and bad for the economy. And leads to expensive anti-trust cases against monopoly-holders. Nobody wins.

There is a small list of other potential issues:

The leading office suite software, Microsoft Office, is, without a doubt, currently the best on the market. This cannot be disputed. However, there is no sensible way for companies to try to make a shot at trying to better Office, as the specifications for the Office files (.doc, .xls, .ppt etcetera) are ANOTHER guarded secret, and a business cannot afford to use software which cannot read or write files compatible with what the company down the road uses. I have personally experienced issues caused already by Microsoft's unnecessary changing of the specifications so that anybody who uses a recent version of the Office software must go to great lengths (losing much formatting information in the process) to be able to send documents to people with older versions. If you have Office 97 and really want to exchange with colleagues, then you're looking at a £250 upgrade for the privilege. Take this scenario, and it gets a thousand times worse when

files created in Word XP with any advanced formatting cannot be opened in a suite for a non-Microsoft-endorsed system such as Gobe Productive under BeOS. The file specifications for most formats (HTML for web pages, JPEG and GIF for images, ZIP for compressed files) have been open to everybody for years, and the buisnesses behind them have NOT suffered as a result. Making the Office formats mandatory is more than a good idea, it's a required action.

The final suggested action is not rooted in Microsoft's monopoly, it's rooted in them being bastards and wanting to take advantage of their monopoly: When a new PC is shipped, Microsoft lisencing states that the reseller's liscence is void if the system isn't a "clean" Windows system. i.e. if the Reseller installed on it, say Windows 2000 Professional AND Mandrake Linux 8.1, the company loses its right to sell Microsoft-equipped machines and Microsoft will never speak to them again. Much as I've ranted, Windows is currently a requirement of a system you intend to use around the home. Windows has been designed, hopwever, to stamp out any other operating systems it finds on your computer, If you have a working BeOS computer and install Windows XP, then it will remove your ability to run BeOS. The same applies for Linux, and any REALLY alternative system you could name - Windows changes the Master Boot Record to disallow the running of other Operating Systems. Every other non-Microsoft operating system in creation provides a "boot loader", which provides a list of the Operating Systems available on a computer when you switch it on, and all the systems in the list will co-exist happily. If you install a non-Microsoft system AFTER Windows, then it will put Windows in its list and the system will still work just as well. However, Microsoft simply do not ALLOW systems to include a dual-boot facility, which could threaten Windows as the user's operating sstem of choice. I'm pretty sure this liscence still covers the installation of any Internet Browser software other than Microsoft Internet Explorer (such as Netscape), as again that could pose a risk to Microsoft. Dual-booting is NOT hard to program. Only obstinance prevents it from existing (and being permitted) in Windows as default. This is a crucial issue which on its own could make Linux much more marketable (if not help BeOS if implemented in isolation).

Thank you for (hopefully) reading through my \$0.02, and I hope the comments are helpful and are taken into account. I am NOT one of the pure anti-Microsoft fanatics you find. I'm a fan of superior products. I use my Microsoft mouse and Joypad as they're the best available. However, the strong arm tactics used by Microsoft for their Operating System and Office software is simply unfair.

Yours sincerely.

--Jo "directhex" Shields